

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
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**TERRORIST THREAT TO UNITED STATES MILITARY BASES - ARE WE ON
THE VERGE OF ANOTHER PEARL HARBOR?**

by

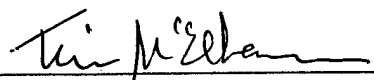
John F. Carter
Major, United States Air Force

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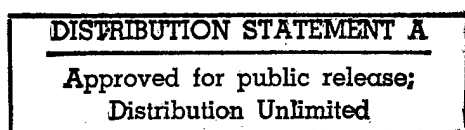
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Signature: 

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CDR Tim McElhannon
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Abstract of

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Introduction

On December 6, 1941 Americans were certainly aware of the world situation and that the U.S. was growing ever closer to entering into another world war. But few believed American soil could or would be attacked. Regardless of all the documented information and speculation as to how we were caught off guard that Sunday morning, December 7, 1941, the fact remains, the Japanese attack was a surprise to the American people that changed the way we would look at the world from that day forward.

This change of attitude carried right on through the fifties and sixties with the advent of bomb shelters being constructed in backyards and bomb drills conducted in our public school systems to protect against the possible nuclear attack from the Soviet Union. But with the end of the Cold War and the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) threat seemingly lessened, it appears we are falling back into a lull of complacency against outside attacks. We have surrendered to the natural desires of relaxing and reaping the benefits from winning the Cold War without immediately confronting the next round of possible threats.

The thought of terrorist attacks for most Americans takes on the form of what we see on the evening news or read in newspapers about events occurring in foreign lands. Even when international terrorist attacks are directed at U.S. interests or citizens, distance removes the *personal effect* on the American public. There are few doubts that many Americans believe the threats are real but look upon our vulnerability to these threats as events that could never happen in our neighborhood.

It is only when such tragedies as the World Trade Center bombing in 1993 and the Oklahoma City Federal Building bombing in 1995 occur that we get a revelation of what could happen in our unstable world. A recent nationwide survey found that 72% of the people surveyed believe there is a chance that terrorists *could* use a weapon of mass destruction similar to the Tokyo Subway Chemical Attack in 1995. Of those surveyed, 66% indicated they are "not much" or "not at all" worried about terrorism in public places.¹

If we are not careful, this same complacency that appears to weave through the attitudes of the American people could filter into our military men and women. We tend to pay more attention toward personal precautions when serving at an overseas station, but these same precautions have a tendency to be relaxed while stateside. In today's world we do not have the rumbles of war machines in Europe and Asia as Americans did in 1941. What we do have is something even louder, the rumble of bombs in our own cities.

The attack on Pearl Harbor was a surprise because most felt the war was far across the great oceans that protected us from our enemies. But now we are in a much smaller world and terrorists can and have brought the war to us. We can no longer perceive that the only outside threat to our nation can come from ICBMs streaking over the North Pole and penetrating our air defenses. The threat can come from one person carrying a briefcase full of explosives or even a small canister containing a biological or chemical weapon that could bring an entire city to its knees.

With this in mind, it is becoming increasingly important for our military men and women to develop a war-like vigilance when dealing with possible terrorist attacks to our military installations and personnel.

Definition of Terms

To delve further into this study it is important to define the meaning of some key terms:²

- **Terrorism** - The calculated use of violence or threat of violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological. Article 22 of the United States Code, Section 2656f (d) defines terrorism as premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.
- **Antiterrorism (AT)** - Force Protection Defensive measures used to reduce the vulnerability of individuals and property to terrorist acts, to include limited response and containment by local military forces.
- **AT Awareness** - Fundamental knowledge of the terrorist threat and measures to reduce personal vulnerability to terrorist acts.
- **AT Resident Training** - Formal classroom instruction in designated Department of Defense (DoD) courses that provide specialized instruction on specific combating terrorism topics; i.e., personal protection, terrorism analysis, regional interest, and AT planning.

- Combating Terrorism - Actions, including AT and CT, taken to oppose terrorism throughout the entire threat spectrum.
- Counterterrorism (CT) - Offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorism.
- Domestic Terrorism - Terrorism perpetrated by the citizens of one country against fellow countrymen.
- International Terrorism - Terrorism in which planning and execution of the terrorist act transcends national boundaries.
- State-Supported Terrorism - Terrorist groups that generally operate independently, but receive support from one or more governments.
- Weapons of Mass Destruction - Nuclear, biological and chemical weapons employed for the purpose of inflicting massive damage including the killing of large numbers of civilians.³

Defining the Threats

In order to successfully defeat your enemy in war, his identity, capabilities, and tactics must be identified. When dealing with terrorists, identifying these characteristics is no easy matter, in many cases it is nearly impossible. An initial step is to review past terrorist acts to see what lessons we may learn for the future. A few of our more recent and/or catastrophic cases include: the Beirut Bombing, the Pan Am Flight 103 Bombing, the World Trade Center Bombing, the Tokyo Subway Chemical Attack, the Oklahoma City Federal Building Bombing, and the Khobar Towers Bombing. What lessons can we learn from these terrorist attacks?

Beirut Bombing

In 1982 a lone terrorist driving a truck loaded with explosives crashed through an occupied guard post and barrier fence then maneuvered around physical barriers and over another guard booth before penetrating into the main lobby of the building. The explosion was so powerful that it ripped the building off its foundation and caused it to collapse upon itself. This tragedy killed 241 U.S. military personnel and wounded over 100 others.

Pan AM Flight 103 Bombing

In 1988 two suspected Libyan terrorists concealed a bomb in a radio on Pan Am Flight 103. The bomb exploded while the flight was cruising at 31,000 feet bringing the Boeing 747 crashing to the ground in Lockerbie, Scotland. All 259 persons on board the aircraft and 11 individuals on the ground were killed.

World Trade Center Bombing

In 1993 a van driven by a suspected Jordanian citizen was parked in the basement garage underneath tower two of the New York Trade Center's twin towers. It exploded killing six people and injuring more than 1,000. It was estimated the bomb consisted of somewhere between 500-1000 pounds of dynamite.

Tokyo Subway Chemical Attack

In 1995 a man wearing a surgical mask boarded a subway train in Tokyo. As the train approached the next stop he placed a foot-long rectangular object wrapped in newspaper on the floor and left the train. Within minutes the object produced a pool of oily substance on the floor that expelled an offensive odor. Similar acts occurred simultaneously at five other subway stops in different parts of Tokyo. Members of a

radical religious group had released a poisonous sarin gas that killed 12 and injured over 5,000 people.

Oklahoma City Federal Building Bombing

Also in 1995 Timothy McVey, an American citizen, parked a Ryder moving van that was full of fertilizer and other chemicals in front of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City. Moments later the van exploded completely tearing away a huge portion of the Federal Building, killing over 160 federal employees and children who were located in an on-site daycare center.

Khobar Towers Bombing

In 1996 a fuel truck was parked next to the northern perimeter fence of the Khobar Towers complex which housed nearly 3,000 U.S. military personnel in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. Air Force guards immediately noticed the driver of the truck fleeing in a car and suspected a bomb. Immediate evacuation efforts of the building began, but before they could be completed the truck exploded. The northern face of the building was completely destroyed, killing 19 U.S. airmen and wounding 240 other U.S. citizens. Many Saudis and other nationals were also injured.

Analysis of these events reveals a great deal about terrorism and the terrorists who carry out these acts.

- *Terrorists can strike anywhere and at anytime* - Terrorism has moved inside our borders. We, as U.S. military men and women, have to recognize that we may be in the terrorist's cross hairs. This awareness cannot be allowed to develop into an attitude of paralysis, but it must generate an attitude of constant vigilance, protecting our people and guarding all of our resources.

- *Terrorists will continue to target Americans and American interests* - The United States government will continue to be a target for terrorist groups due to its firm stance against terrorist activities along with a commitment to political reform and constructive change. The 1996 Patterns of Global Terrorism Report indicated that there were 73 separate and distinct anti-U.S. attacks largely consisting of low-intensity bombings of oil pipelines in Colombia that were seen as U.S. targets by Colombian terrorists.⁴ One international terrorist attack that targeted the U.S. military attributed for 19 of the 25 U.S. citizens killed in 1996, more than doubling the total deaths of 1995. This same attack was blamed for 240 of the 250 citizens injured in international terrorist attacks in 1996, five times the number injured in 1995. Military personnel and facilities will continue to be prime targets because we represent the U.S. government.

Having emerged as the world's military superpower, and with an increased global involvement, the United States is likely to be viewed as the primary party in future disputes. In addition, when the U.S. moves beyond "peace keeping" to "peace enforcement" operations, the likelihood of a reaction among one or more disputants is possible.⁵

- *Terrorist capabilities can no longer be considered primitive or outdated* - The time when terrorist activities were primarily conducted with small arms and explosive devices and centered on thug-type tactics is all but over. Now state sponsored terrorists are more high tech than ever before. In an article entitled "Bomb School: International Terrorist Training Camps," the author, Thomas

Hunter, indicates these terrorist camps are teaching advanced courses in surveillance and counter-surveillance, secure electronic communications, foreign languages and the production of false identification documents, border infiltration, along with small arms training, to include mines, rocket-propelled grenades, and car bombs.⁶ As the technical abilities of terrorists continue to grow, technologies used in antiterrorism must remain one step ahead.

- *Terrorist groups will use whatever means they have available to complete their mission* - The disturbing trend indicated in the terrorist events above is that the magnitude of the weapons was immense and it appears that the intent is to kill as many people as possible. It was reported that Ramzi Yousef, the convicted mastermind of the World Trade Center bombing, said he had set out to kill as many Americans as possible and regretted that he was not able to kill the quarter of a million that he was aiming for. Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright indicated in her Testimony on Terrorism that "although the number of international terrorist attacks fell to 296 last year (1996), compared with 440 in 1995, the death toll worldwide in 1996 rose to 311, compared with 177 in 1995."⁷ This lends credence to the fact that terrorists are getting increased access to more powerful and devastating explosives and weapons and it should be assumed that terrorists currently have or are on the verge of getting weapons of mass destruction in their arsenal.
- *Our terrorist threat is not solely international* - The Oklahoma City Bombing sheds light on the problem of domestic terrorism that we currently face. Anti-government groups that are able to remain in the United States protected by

our constitutional rights are definitely a force that must be watched. Even the threat of a cooperation between domestic terrorists and their international counterparts cannot be underestimated. This type of terrorist cooperation would certainly increase the threat for domestic targets, including military installations.

The Bottom Line

The underlying theme remains constant -- the threat of terrorist activities against the U.S. military is here to stay. Simply put, we have been and are going to continue to be terrorist targets. This is true for several reasons.

- Carl Von Clausewitz states that war is nothing more than an extension or instrument of policy.⁸ Taking this statement one step further would be to say that any U.S. military action or presence anywhere in the world is an extension of government policy and provides the terrorist a uniformed target.
- Our military is certainly one of our country's centers of gravity. There is not a terrorist group in the world that can match up head-to-head with our massive military strength. However, guerilla tactics used effectively by these groups could certainly create havoc. Terrorist acts such as the ones we have already discussed in Dhahran and Beirut are vivid reminders of the horrifying effects these acts can have on our military presence.
- With the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union, the U.S. has emerged as the world's military leader. The U.S. military will

continue to be an effective government policy tool to protect America's global interests and responsibilities. Our ability to meet our national security strategy throughout the world is unmatched by any other nation. Additionally, we have the ability to come to the aid of governments whose progress toward democracy is challenged by others. This forward presence presents opportunities for terrorism. But with more terrorist violence occurring within our national borders, forward presence of our troops does not present the only risk to military personnel.

- Terrorist tactics can gain huge dividends for little cost. One successful terrorist act of the magnitude we have studied gains the terrorist international recognition and may result in the achievement of their objectives. Beyond the loss of life and destruction that these acts can bring are the psychological gains they may achieve. Following the gas attack in Japan's subway, millions of Tokyo residents remained terrified to use the train system until the terrorists were apprehended.⁹
- Terrorists have attacked before and leave no reason for us to believe they will not attack in the future. Evidence of this may be found in their quest to gain the latest weapons technology and their desire to possess weapons of mass destruction. They have proven their ability to accomplish acts, that at one time were thought to be impossible, by blowing up a Federal Building in the U.S. and killing hundreds of innocent citizens.

What Must Be Done

First and foremost, we must instill the attitude in all our military personnel that we are at war with terrorists. We must ensure that not only is vigilance against terrorist acts maintained at a high level when deployed overseas, but also this same vigilance must be heightened for those stationed stateside. Combating terrorism must be a high priority. As the number of permanent overseas installations continues to decline and our forward presence is reduced, we must expect stateside military bases to become attractive targets for terrorist activity. From a terrorist point of view, a large-scale terrorist act inside a major military installation within the U.S. border could have a much greater strategic impact than an attack at an overseas location. The option of pulling troops out of a hostile environment, though not a popular one to our fighting forces, has always been present in an overseas situation. The same latitude is certainly not available stateside. We must aggressively meet this challenge that lies ahead and not allow it to simply present itself to us, thereby dictating our actions.

Second, installation security must be a command emphasis. Over the past few years, military base entry point security has declined from a once stringent 100% identification (ID) card check 24 hours a day, seven days a week to now where many bases present an open base policy in which entry gates do not post security guards. Now when these open bases conduct a Threat Condition (THREATCON) exercise that includes posting gate guards and reinstating 100% ID card checks, it is met with complaints and impatience. I have personally witnessed the complaints directed at these exercises, especially during high-peak traffic periods, that have caused base

battlestaff planners to actually rearrange the times of certain events to occur only during off-peak traffic periods. This does not allow for a true assessment of base security procedures and could fail to reveal potential problems *if and when* an actual terrorist attack occurs. The attitudes of the base population when confronted with 100% ID card checks and other more stringent base entry procedures reflects that most base military and civilian personnel fail to have a healthy appreciation of the true potential of terrorist attacks, believing that, "it would never happen here."

Commanders must not only ensure base personnel are educated about how to conduct antiterrorist programs but they must also ensure that all are educated on why they are needed. Convincing military personnel that the threat of terrorism is real is crucial to the vigilance needed.

This concept is supported by General Wayne Downing, retired Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Special Operations Command, who was appointed by former Secretary of Defense William Perry to conduct the assessment of the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. One finding of Downing's assessment indicates that while committees at all levels in the theater and in the U.S. were active in discussing force protection policies and practices, this did not contribute materially to the security of military people and facilities.¹⁰ In short, those at the tactical level failed to get the information needed to protect U.S. forces.

That brings us to the next issue of implementation of an aggressive training program DoD-wide to facilitate the growing need for increased awareness and security. An article in a recent edition of Air Force Magazine quotes then Secretary of Defense William Perry, "Terrorists will always search out and strike at the weakest

link in our chain of defense. Our goal is to find and strengthen those weak spots.....”¹¹ Military personnel who are unaware and untrained about terrorism and its potential threat certainly constitute a weak spot that can be easily exploited by highly skilled terrorists. Training is the best way to strengthen these weak spots.

Secretary of State Albright indicated in her testimony to the Senate on terrorism that “Effective counterterrorism calls for the skills and resources of many U.S. Government agencies.”¹² With the President designating the FBI as the lead agency for countering terrorism in the U.S., it is imperative that the DoD be included in the process. To facilitate this, the DoD must designate a single agency that would standardize a way to develop, implement and inspect force protection and physical security standards for all DoD organizations. Even with a standardized structure, it is imperative that the differences in roles of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard be taken into consideration, allowing each to mold the requirements into guidance that best fits their operational environment.

By standardizing force protection and physical security requirements, all services will be able to train from the same “sheet of music” in peacetime and war, while stateside or during overseas deployment. This simple, but effective, concept will aid in reducing the growing pains that accompany our increasing joint mission tasks.

Another aspect that must be included is to exercise and evaluate our training objectives. This means conducting full-scale exercises involving the entire base population in order to practice and rehearse all actions required in combating terrorism. This includes all the actions that would be required of base personnel,

from increasing antiterrorist awareness to defending against actual terrorist attacks. Trained evaluators must also be made available to rigidly analyze the results and provide thorough feedback to commanders assessing unit capabilities. The results of these exercises should be distributed throughout the DoD to further aid other units in their training programs.

To add credibility to exercise scenarios, all of our nation's interagency groups that actively study, track, and pursue counterterrorist/antiterrorist activities should create a small task force to develop terrorist threat scenarios for implementation into unit exercise programs. This allows the experts the ability to develop scenarios consistent with terrorist tactics (e.g. targeting weak spots of resistance in military security), providing commanders a clear picture of security effectiveness.

Last but certainly not least is the development of technology. The DoD must remain relentless in the cooperation and funding toward research and development of antiterrorist and counterterrorist technology. As long as domestic and international terrorist groups seek out and obtain the world's most sophisticated weapon systems, we can never rest on current technology used to combat terrorism. While technology alone will never win a war, the one who falls behind in research and development of weapon and defense systems will always fight from a disadvantage.

Conclusion

As we arose victorious from the Cold War, we were saddled with the distinction of being the world's sole remaining superpower. With this title comes the unprecedented responsibility of addressing many of the world's troubles. While not

shying away from this responsibility, we must also attempt to anticipate and understand the viewpoints and responses of nations that view our participation in world events differently than we do. In becoming the world's policemen, we also become an attractive target for those who oppose our international actions. Our aggressive national objective of countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction brings us into conflict with nations that consider these to be the tools that they can use to achieve their own objectives.

It is certainly no secret that one of our nation's centers of gravity is our military. The American people have tremendous confidence in their military and its ability to protect and defend the United States of America. A rogue group or state-funded terrorist organization could certainly achieve limited objectives and possibly weaken our nation's confidence in our military strength by successfully achieving a terrorist attack against one of our military installations. "Terrorism is a tool of states, a vehicle of expression for organizations and even a way of life for individuals. We can expect the terrorists to continue to seek out vulnerabilities and attack. Terrorists normally prey on the weak, but even militaries have vulnerabilities and present targets with high publicity value."¹³ It is up to *all* military leaders to instill an attitude in our military men and women that terrorist threats are not just something we see on television or read about in the newspapers. Our national strategy must include an attitude of war against terrorism. The military leadership must ensure our troops stationed both stateside and abroad are provided with the training necessary to allow them to stand vigilant, successfully deterring and defeating terrorism and its threat.

We can and will prevail over this threat as long as we remain aware of and prepared for anything that may come our way. Let us not allow another tragedy, like the one that occurred December 7, 1941, be the event that draws our nation's attention to this dangerous enemy.

Notes

- ¹ "Public Apathetic About Nuclear Terrorism," Linked from The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, <<http://www.people-press.org/terrep.htm>>, (6 January 1998), 1.
- ² Department of Defense, Combating Terrorism Program (DoD Directive 2000.12), 15 September 1996, <<http://www.dtic.mil/adm/data/d2000-12.html>>, (29 December 1997), 10-12.
- ³ National Defense University, quoted in George M. Birdsong, Weapons of Mass Destruction-Terrorist Use and the State of Domestic Response (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 1997), 5.
- ⁴ Department of State, Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1996 <<http://www.state.gov/www/global/terrorism/1996report/1996index.html>>, (20 January 1998), 1.
- ⁵ Steven Sloan, "Terrorism: How Vulnerable is the United States?" The Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College, May 1995, <<http://www.terrorism.com/terrorism/essays.html>>, (18 January 1998), 5.
- ⁶ Thomas Hunter, "Bomb School: International Terrorist Training Camps," Jane's Intelligence Review, March 1997, 134.
- ⁷ Department of State, Statement for the Record Before the Senate Committee on Appropriations Hearing on Terrorism (Washington: 13 May 1997), <<http://www.secretary.state.gov/www/statements>>, (2 January 1998), 1.
- ⁸ Carl Von Clausewitz, ed., ON WAR (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 87.
- ⁹ Bruce A. Hoover, Combating Terrorism: A New National Strategy (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 1997), 2.
- ¹⁰ "Terrorism...An Undeclared War," Defense, no.6, 1996, 20.
- ¹¹ Bill Gertz, "Terrorism and the Force," Air Force Magazine, v.80, no.2, February 1997, 71.
- ¹² Department of State, Statement for the Record Before the Senate Committee on Appropriations Hearing on Terrorism (Washington: 13 May 1997), <<http://www.secretary.state.gov/www/statements>>, (2 January 1998), 2.
- ¹³ Department of Defense, Report to the President: The Protection of U.S. Forces Deployed Abroad (Washington: 15 September 1996), <<http://www.terrorism.com/terrorism/essays.html>>, (5 January 1998), 15.

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